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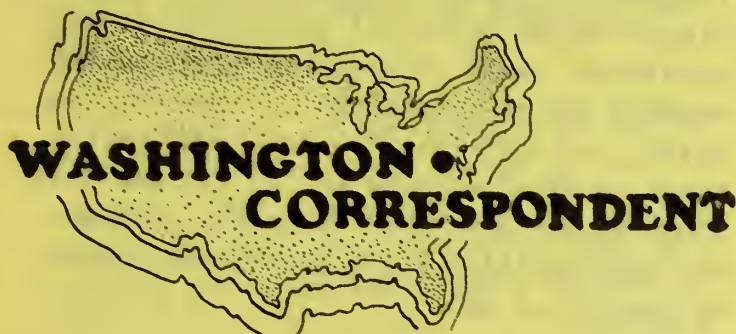
SERVICE
U. S. Department of Agriculture

NEWS

ISSUED FOR THE STAFF OF THE SOIL CONSERVATION
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February 25, 1942

No. 29



The time to talk about efficiency ratings has rolled around again.

The SCS Efficiency Rating Committee has begun its work earlier this year because of two factors--(1) a new rating system has been set up, and (2) efficiency ratings are now more important to every employee.

We want to talk about the second factor first--the importance of efficiency ratings this year. The Mead-Ramspeck Act, which set up the system of within-grade promotions, provides that "automatic advancements can only be received upon the attainment of an appropriate efficiency rating by the employee." This means that in order to be eligible for an administrative raise an employee must merit an efficiency rating of good, or better than good, on the last rating date. So efficiency ratings this spring will determine which employees will be eligible for raises within the year.

Because of the added importance of ratings this year and because there were some recognized defects in the old rating system, the folks who make the rules have gotten together and have made some revisions which they hope will take the kinks

out of the system. The Civil Service Commission in cooperation with the Council of Personnel Administration (composed of the Directors of Personnel of the executive departments and independent agencies of the Federal Government) have made the revisions in the rating system, and here are some of the things they did--

This year there will be a new efficiency rating sheet--but only one form for all types of positions, instead of the two different forms in use in the past. There will also be a new efficiency rating manual issued by the Civil Service Commission, fully explaining the new system and giving the necessary instructions to the rating officers, the reviewing officers, and the efficiency rating review committees. The new rating sheets and the new manual are now in the hands of the printer, and supplies will be forwarded to the regional offices as soon as they are received from the printer.

In revising the rating system, the Civil Service Commission and the Personnel Administration Council kept in mind the objectives to be sought as they were outlined by the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives in its report on the Third Supplemental National Defense Appropriation Bill, 1942. The Committee stated:

"The committee desires to call attention to one feature of the new system. The automatic advancements can only be received upon the attainment of an appropriate efficiency rating by the employee. The responsibility of the rating officer

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SCS AND THE PRESENT NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Since returning from his trip to Venezuela, Chief Bennett has been busily engaged in the study of how SCS can best meet the responsibilities placed upon it in the present wartime emergency. He has outlined a comprehensive program for both the war and post-war periods. We are reprinting here, in part, the Chief's statement so that every SCS employee may more fully understand the policies and objectives of the Service in the present national emergency.

"The primary responsibility of American agriculture during the emergency is the production of the food and fiber needed for victory without added impairment of the land. To carry its full share of this responsibility and contribute to the greatest possible extent to winning the war, the Department of Agriculture has reorganized its administrative machinery.

"To avoid the costly production and land-use mistakes of the last war and as a further safeguard for our basic resource, the soil, the Soil Conservation Service has been grouped with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Sugar Division.

"These four agencies will retain their present organizational status but their activities will be supervised and directed by the Administrator of Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment. The broad effect of this grouping is further to assure the farmer or rancher of his fair share of the national income, protection against financial losses from causes beyond his control, and assistance in the preservation and improvement of his principal capital asset, the soil.

"The programs of the AAA and the SCS have been supplementary and complementary to each other in the past and there are opportunities for additional effective cooperation. Further adjustment of the farm

conservation plans to secure maximum practice payments while carrying out the essential conservation work is desirable. Adjustment of AAA practices to provide more conservation is an objective that both agencies should strive to achieve to an even greater degree than in the past. Adjustment of AAA practice payments to further the simple conservation practice program where technical assistance is not available would materially advance the economy and effectiveness of conservation work. AAA payments for soil-conserving crops to which classes IV, V, VI, and VII lands should be retired represent a valuable aid in getting these areas rededicated to their best use.

"The Soil Conservation Service is evaluating its activities and its resources by a yardstick that measures the contribution the Service can make toward winning the war by production with conservation. It is the duty of all working together to exert every possible effort toward winning the war and then the peace. The opportunity of a closer working relationship within the group set up under the recent reorganization is welcomed. Continuing cooperation should be maintained with Federal, State, and local organizations serving Agriculture.

"The research branch of the Service, cooperating with the State Experiment Stations, will assemble all available data having a bearing on the problems involved in a form most useful to farmers and ranchers, district supervisors, county and State Agricultural Conservation and Agricultural Planning Committees, the military services, and others. Such information will be kept current. Research projects will be designed to determine as speedily as possible the solution of conservation problems of immediate concern to farmers, AAA, and SCS. Research workers will conduct field trials necessary for the extension of operations into new areas.

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SCS AND THE PRESENT NATIONAL EMERGENCY

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"The Departmental policy of gearing SCS facilities and resources to the needs of soil conservation districts continues to be a primary responsibility. The formation of additional districts should be encouraged. The soil and water conservation program of districts can be counted on as an effective means of achieving war time objectives.

"In addition to the activities as set forth in the Manual, the impact of war has brought other responsibilities to the Service and the districts which must also be given immediate and serious attention. These have to do with: (1) increased acreages of erosion-inducing crops, as peanuts and soy beans, in certain areas, (2) a general increase in the production of crops which may accelerate erosion, (3) the erosion problem on land used for military purposes, and (4) plans for conservation in the post-war period.

"To meet these new responsibilities the Service will (1) give immediate attention to the use of adequate measures and safeguards in critical production areas, (2) inaugurate a widespread program of simple practices, (3) provide effective assistance to the armed forces in accordance with existing agreement, and (4) continue the work of post-war planning.

* * * *

"A program of simple practices should be initiated within portions of soil conservation districts not being reached by work unit personnel and outside soil conservation districts to the full extent of available personnel. The Soil Conservation Service should assist in (1) developing a list of simple practices by erosion problem areas or counties, (2) setting up guides for the application of simple practices on different kinds of land, (3) preparing simple specifications for practice application, (4) explaining the program to

district supervisors and County USDA War Boards, and (5) developing procedures for carrying the program to the farmers. Unless absolutely necessary the contribution of the Service (beyond the participation already established in connection with the work of War Boards) should end with (5). This would enable SCS personnel to continue with district soil conservation responsibilities. Carrying the simple practice program to the farmers and its application is the responsibility of War Boards. Soil conservation districts, extension services, Agricultural Conservation and Agricultural Planning Committees, and others. SCS assistance in the simple practice program within districts will be accomplished through the governing bodies cooperating with War Boards and others, while outside districts such SCS assistance will be directly with War Boards and others.

"Food and fiber needed by the Nation and its allies include large acreages of clean tilled, soil-depleting crops. Wherever needed Service representatives will assist farmers and ranchers so far as possible in attaining production essential in critical production areas. These operators can be most effectively and adequately helped through the complete functioning, cooperatively, of the trained personnel of the State Extension Services, the State Experiment Stations, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Soil Conservation Service, and other agencies. The Soil Conservation Service, therefore, will work closely with the respective State Soil Conservation Advisory Committees (State Directors of Extension Services and Experiment Stations and SCS State Coordinators) and AAA State Administrators in (a) determining areas where production gives rise to critical soil problems and farmers need additional assistance; (b) formulating and agreeing upon uniform recommendations for each such area;

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SCS AND THE PRESENT NATIONAL EMERGENCY

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(c) determining assistance needed in such areas during critical seasons in addition to that currently available therein; (d) considering what assistance the Extension Services, the State Experiment Stations, SCS and AAA can make available for work in each such area, and (e) detailing or assigning personnel and making available other assistance agreed upon for work in the respective critical areas. Emergency plans and measures may have to suffice for 1942. If so it should be understood that such emergency measures and plans are to be changed over or converted into permanent soil safeguards.

"The armed forces constitute the Nation's front line for war. These services continue to request the help of the SCS in erosion control operations, drainage flood control, protection of water supplies against sedimentation, camouflage and similar protective and facilitating activities on and near camp sites, cantonments, air fields, and other military areas. The Soil Conservation Service has from the beginning responded readily and expects to continue to make available whatever help of this type the armed services may require.

"The scope of the work to be done by the Department in the post war planning field involves three different lines of inquiry: (a) keeping in touch with and making what contribution it can to developments that affect the national economy as a whole; (b) developing of rural works programs in the capital improvement field; and (c) developing publicly sponsored programs of rural welfare and services. The Soil Conservation Service will be most helpful with work in the capital improvements field. In so far as personnel and resources are available without undue slackening of needed efforts in the war program, post war planning and projecting will be undertaken in keeping with Departmental procedures and in cooperation with

other agencies outside the Department such as Soil Conservation Districts, Public Work Reserve, and National Resources Planning Board. The Service's organization is especially well designed for an important role in post war reconstruction. It is thoroughly experienced in the efficient use of very large quantities of labor, equipment, and materials in soil and water conservation and land use adjustments."

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Dillon S. Myer is moving to his new quarters on the third floor of the South Building and is taking over his new duties as Assistant Administrator of the ACAA. Conservator Louis P. Merrill has come from Fort Worth to Washington to assist Chief Bennett in formulating future plans and policies for SCS under the reorganization plan for the Department of Agriculture.

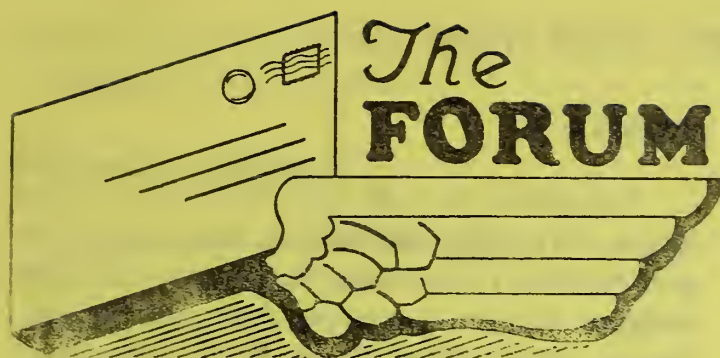
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WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

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under the automatic promotion law enters a new phase. With the promotion of each individual employee dependent upon the degree of the efficiency rating the human factor becomes the crucial element in the operation of the system. The committee hopes that consideration will be given to methods that will insure for the efficiency rating system the fullest measure of integrity and protection against discrimination or favoritism in bestowing the ratings. The success of the automatic promotion system depends vitally upon a sound procedure that will command the respect of the employees and give to the Congress the confidence that promotions are made upon a thoroughly impartial and justifiable basis."

In a later issue of Service News we plan to give you some more details about the new efficiency rating system.



RESEARCH NEWS

SOMETHING'S OMITTED

It was with a mounting sense of reverence and inspiration that I read the beautiful re-phrasing of the story of the shepherds and the star and the tribute to America and American characteristics in your "Toward the New Year." But may I say frankly that the article left me with the feeling that something vital in our way of life had not been mentioned. I was not a little disturbed that there had been no reference to the indispensable place of religion in our American way of life, a religion year by year becoming broader, more tolerant, and more far-reaching and without which the peace for which we all yearn cannot be enduring.

This letter voices my personal reaction to your New Year challenge published in the "Service News" of December 31, and in no way involves the Soil Conservation Service unit to which I am attached in the capacity of clerk-stenographer.

B.E.F.

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An outstanding year of district activity is recounted by Chief Bennett in his 1941 Report to the Secretary. During the past year "the number of organized soil conservation districts increased from 314 at the beginning of the year to 548 at the end of the year--from an area of 190,163,351 acres to 332,088,660 acres. The number of districts cooperating with the Department of Agriculture almost doubled--from 224 to 439--in the same 12 months."

A poll among farmers who have been cooperating with SCS for 5 years in the Flemington area, New Jersey, showed that 50% of them believed conservation practices had increased the value of their farms on an average of over \$300 per farm. The farmers were interviewed by personnel of the Division of Economic Research. No farmer reported that conservation had caused his farm to decrease in value.

Two facts were brought out by this survey that are especially good news on account of the War. The conservation program had enabled some of the farmers to increase their livestock, thus indirectly aiding the Food-for-Freedom campaign. Conservation was accomplished without additional machinery--another fact that is good news since war requirements necessitate economies in all metal products.

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According to a survey made by the Division of Economic Research in Houston County, Minnesota, on land where the slope is over 30% it takes three acres to provide pasture for a cow, while on pastures where the slope is 9% or less, it requires only 1.6 acres to provide pasture for one cow.

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Fallow plots near Marcellus, N. Y., having an 18% slope lost 143 tons per acre this year (excluding the melting snow period) while similar plots in grass having the same slope lost less than 200 lbs. to the acre.

A field near Presque Isle, Maine, on which small contour ridges were used, produced 186 barrels of potatoes per acre. This was a 50-barrel increase per acre over previous yields from this same field before conservation practices were used.

REGIONAL DEFENSE ACTIVITIES

In response to the request for news of regional defense activities we have received some fine reports of patriotic endeavors from all sections of the country. The first reports--from Regions 3 and 6--have been published in Service News. What is happening in some of the other regions is related here:

Region 1

The Red Cross has agreed to set up a mobile unit of its blood donor service in the Center Building--where the regional offices are located--on March 16. Between 100 and 150 donors are expected. Arrangements were made by John H. Wetzel, safety engineer, working with the regional defense committee. Invitations will be extended also to employees of FSA, BAE, the USDA regional library, and Office of Information field service who are located in the same building.

The Center Building has been completely organized for civilian defense, according to the standard OCD plan. J. Blair Muffley, chief of the Regional Personnel Division, is defense coordinator for the building in which, in addition to the Federal bureaus, are located about 10 stores and business offices. All tenants are represented in the organization.

Sixty-six regional office employees are enrolled in 2 Red Cross standard first-aid courses.

Region 3

One hundred twenty-three regional office employees at Dayton have received Red Cross first aid certificates or are enrolled in classes, reports A. J. Truelson, head of the Safety Section. Eight persons have completed the 45-hour course and are now teaching first aid classes. All of these employees are volunteers in Civilian Defense branches requiring first aid training.

Region 5

Organization of the SCS Wives' Red Cross Knitting and Sewing Club is the newest activity in connection with civilian defense at the Milwaukee regional office. Forty wives of staff members have organized and are meeting every Wednesday night at Conservator Musser's home.

Among other group activities is the SCS Girls' Sewing and Knitting Club in which 62 girls are participating, including a number from BAE, which is located in the same building.

Two Red Cross first aid classes with an enrollment of 142 SCS and BAE staff members and their wives are meeting on Monday and Thursday evenings after work.

To help staff members who have no other way of disposing of scrap paper, rubber, and needed metals, the office has been divided into three teams--the Marines, Navy, and Army--to collect and dispose of these vital defense materials.

Since last summer the regional office--as well as the 145 field offices which it supervises--has had an organized campaign for the sale of defense bonds and stamps.

Plans are now under way to hold fire drills and to organize an emergency fire fighting crew and salvage squad for use in the event of fire, explosion, or other disaster.

Region 8

The Albuquerque staff has been thoroughly organized for civilian defense, and, in the event of a wartime emergency, 170 employees will swing into effective action within a few minutes, according to Floyd D. Matthews, Assistant Regional Conservator.

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REGIONAL DEFENSE

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Region 8 (continued)

Seventy-three men are being trained in 11 mobile units at the central repair shop and will be on call for emergency work in Albuquerque or anywhere in the region. The other 87 employees have been appointed to 12 plant units. Their chief duties will be to act as guards of the six buildings occupied by SCS, to do communications and supply work, and to give first aid.

The 11 mobile units have been organized by Leslie E. Love, regional equipment supervisor. With Frank C. Norris, central repair shop foreman, acting as coordinator, the crews are divided into two 12-hour shifts. The crews are in training nearly every night and during Saturday afternoons. The men are working voluntarily after regular hours of labor.

Units have been named according to the work they will perform: Firefighting, demolition, repair and demolition (for heavy steel structures), automobile repair, water supply, ambulance, transportation, wrecking for airplanes, electric generating, and dewatering (pumping out flooded areas).

Region 10

With a view to keeping regional office personnel better posted on local civilian defense activities, the Spokane office has put up a special "Defense News" bulletin board with a designated space for each day in the week. Information Division clips all pertinent current news stories, mounts them on light-bond sheets with Scotch tape, and posts them daily, changing one space each day. The project was started more or less as an experiment, but it is being maintained regularly as a result of observation and comments heard indicating this improvised defense clipping service is read widely.

SUPERVISORS USE RADIO IN DISTRICT PROGRAM

The supervisors in two Maryland districts are using the transcribed series "This Land We Defend" in the district educational program.

The supervisors of the Allegany District have arranged for broadcasts of the shows over station WTBO, Cumberland, at 1:00 P.M. on ten consecutive Thursdays, beginning January 22.

The Washington County supervisors arranged for broadcasts over WJEJ, Hagerstown, on Thursdays at 1:15, beginning January 8.

John Cotton, Extension Soil Conservationist, writes of the Washington County broadcasts that "To date both the supervisors and the radio station seem to be quite pleased. They seem to be in favor of doing something like this again in the future."

"WATCH YOUR STEP"

Particularly pertinent in these days when the Secretary is calling for efficient farm production is the information contained in the recently issued bulletin, "Watch Your Step--Farm Safety for National Defense", USDA Miscellaneous Publication No. 481. The bulletin was sponsored by the Committee on Agricultural Safety, Federal Interdepartmental Safety Council, of which H. C. Mesch is chairman. Copy and layout were prepared by Wellington Brink.

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Dr. James L. Gardner is acting supervisor of the Mexican Springs demonstration project at Gallup, New Mexico, during Dr. D. S. Hubbell's leave of absence. Dr. Hubbell went to Venezuela with the Chief's party and he expects to remain there for some months while completing a survey of soil conservation problems in that country.

PRINTERS' INK

"An Inexpensive Planimeter" by Laurence M. Dickerson, Chief of the Regional Biology Division at Dayton, Ohio, in the January *Journal of Forestry*.

"Invasion of a Protected Area by Exotic Plants" by Dr. Richard M. Bond, biologist at Berkeley, Calif., and Atwell M. Wallace, in the November *Scientific Monthly*.

"Kudzu--a Mender of Tattered Lands" by Wellington Brink, editor of *Soil Conservation*, in the January issue of *Better Crops With Plant Food*.

"Soil Defenders from Overseas" by Wellington Brink in the February *Nature Magazine*.

"My Father Preaches" by Angus McDonald, in the current issue of *The Land*.

"Hydraulic Design of Drop Structures for Gully Control" by B. T. Morris, hydraulic engineer of the Regional Sedimentation Division and working at Pasadena, Calif.; and D. C. Johnson, assistant regional engineer at Berkeley, in the January issue of *Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers*. The authors presented this paper July 1941 at the Hydraulic Division of the annual convention of the American Society of Civil Engineers at San Diego.

OFF THE PRESS

"Erosion and Related Land Use Conditions on the Box Elder Creek Project, Nebraska" by H. C. Mortlock and R. D. Greenawalt. Erosion Survey No. 22.

"A Method of Estimating the Economic Effects of Planned Conservation on an Individual Farm" by Arthur C. Bunce and George W. Collier. Miscellaneous Publication No. 463.

"1941 Report of the Chief of the Soil Conservation Service."

FIELD MEMORANDA

813-A Personnel releases. (Procedure resigning or refusing to sign releases for transfer of personnel elsewhere in the USDA or to other Departments.)

1048 Designation of Verna C. Mohagen as Acting Chief, Personnel Management Division. (Miss Mohagen succeeds Leland Barrows, who has resigned to take a position in the office of Administrator of Agricultural Marketing.)

1049 New importance of efficiency ratings. (Efficiency ratings will be used in connection with within-grade promotions under the Mead-Ramspeck Act.)

1050 Hours of duty. (Sets up 8-hour day and 44-hour week for all USDA employees except in cases where 40-hour week or other limitation is legally required.)

1043-B Third registration under the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. (February 16, 1942 has been designated as the date for the third registration under the Selective Service Act.)

1051 Designation of Joseph S. Durkin as Acting Head, Section of Investigation. (Mr. Durkin succeeds Harold M. Salmon who has resigned to take a position with Civil Service Commission.)

1052 New duties of Mr. Dillon G. Myer. (Mr. Myer has now assumed his duties as Assistant Administrator of ACAA.)

906-A Hunting, fishing, or trapping on lands held under Title III being administered by the SCS. (Revised procedure for the establishment of State wildlife refuges.)